

Bancroft House
9050 Memory Lane
Spring Valley, San Diego County
California

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California

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PHOTO-DATA BOOK REPORT
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BANCROFT HOUSE

Spring Valley, San Diego County, California

ADDRESS: 9050 Memory Lane
OWNER: Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce
OCCUPANT: Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce
USE: Museum

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Built about 1856 by A. S. Ensworth, Justice of the Peace. Occupied by Captain Rufus K. Porter who gave Spring Valley its name. Later occupied by Hubert Howe Bancroft, the famous historian, from 1885 until his death in 1918.

The Bancroft House is California Registered Historical Landmark No. 626 and a Landmark in the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings in Theme XX, The Arts and Sciences, sub-Theme, Literature, Drama and Music.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

The history of the land and the surrounding area indicates its habitation by Indians. The files of the San Diego Mission tell of baptising of Indian converts at a spring as early as 1775. From these same documents came the earliest record of the homestead site.

The Indians called the spring Meti, later discarded by Spanish settlers for Las Fuentes de San Jorge, The Spring of St. George. In 1801 a battle for possession of the land was staged between the

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Indians and Spanish forces with the latter gaining ownership.

A. S. Ensworth, a Justice of the Peace, bought the land from a Mexican and built the adobe on it in about 1856. He was elected a state assemblyman in 1859.

Ensworth obtained lumber from the wrecked ship Clarissa Andrews, off Ballast Point, and moved the oak timbers, decking and doors to the adobe. Ensworth lived there until 1865, when Captain Rufus K. Porter recorded his declaration of homestead. And it was Porter who gave Spring Valley its name.

Twenty years later Porter sold the land to Hubert Howe Bancroft, noted writer and historian. Born in 1832, Bancroft came to California in 1852 and tried his hand briefly at mining. In 1855 he opened a book and stationary store in San Francisco, later becoming a book publisher. Collecting and assembling 10,000 titles by 1868, he began writing histories of the West. His collection, bequeathed to the University of California, contained more than 60,000 books, pamphlets, newspapers, etc. Bancroft and his staff produced 39 volumes of history between 1882 and 1890. He bought the Spring Valley Ranch and the adobe house in 1885. Here he continued to write and experiment with many types of plants and crops until his death in 1918.

In 1941 Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce purchased the adobe and three and one half acres, repaired the adobe, built on an addition and used it as a meeting place and clubhouse for the community.

In October 1958, the building (one of the oldest in the east part of the county) was given an historical marker by the State. March 24, 1963, the Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce, after extensive repairs, opened the adobe to the public as the Bancroft Museum.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

GENERAL

The structure consists of two rooms, one about 14'-6" x 14'-10" and the other about 14'-6" x 11'-11", with no connecting doorway.

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Each room has an entrance from the portico which extends the full length of the south side. The larger room has an additional door through the north wall and a fireplace on the west gabled wall, while the smaller room had only the entrance door. The window in the west wall of the larger room and the door in the north wall of the smaller room were added later. There was a cellar under the larger room that has now been filled in.

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions:

The overall dimensions of the old building are about 32'-3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long, 18'-4" wide, 10'-0" to the plate, 16'-5" to the ridge. The portico adds about 6'-6" to the width of the building.

Foundation and Wall Construction:

Original foundations consisted of rock laid in mortar from 2'-0" more or less below floor level to a few inches above grade and the same width as the adobe wall above. The walls were made of adobe bricks about 3" deep and 11" long and are built about 1'-8" to 2'-0" thick with adobe blocks being carried up east and west gable ends to the ridge. The wall separating the two rooms also is of adobe brick.

In the restoration of 1963, the foundations generally were strengthened on one side (not exterior) by a continuous reinforced concrete footing 1'-0" wide and about 1'-6" deep integral with a 4" concrete slab which itself is reinforced with 6" x 6" - #10 x #10 reinforcing mesh.

Porticos:

The portico along the entire south side of the building is 32'-3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long by 6'-6" wide carried on seven 4" x 4" wood posts that rest on 6" x 8" x 2" wood base blocks now on flag stone but previously on wood floor. The 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 6" lintel laid flat carries the 2" x 6" rafters which are spaced about 2'-0" on center and continue the slope of the main roof. The rafter overhang is about 6".

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The ceiling of the portico is made up of 1" x 4" "V" joint T&G ceiling material run parallel to the slope. A 3" x 7" rafter closes the ends.

It is thought that originally there was a similar portico along the north side but at present the addition of 1941 adjoins the adobe along the north wall.

Fireplace:

The fireplace on the west exterior wall is 4'-1" wide and projects 1'-0" into the room. It is placed about 5'-1" from the south wall and about 4'-2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the north wall. It has an opening 1'-9" wide by 2'-1" high with a 1" thick pine mantel shelf projecting 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " and at a height of 3'-11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " above the floor. The chimney breast projects 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". The fire box is brick lined and the hearth is 1'-10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 4'-0" made of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " round stones. The plastered brick chimney on the exterior is about 2'-0" east, west by 2'-6" north, south and projects along the north side of the ridge to 1'-6" above it.

Doorways:

The doorways vary in height and width with frames made up of a flat wood member 1'-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 3" serving as jamb and lintel (not on edge) placed flush with the exterior line of the wall and trimmed with a 2-3/4" x 1-3/4". The stop is 1' x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " bevelled. There is a splay on the interior of the two entrance doors at the jamb of about 5". The doorway from the smaller room through the adobe wall to the north has a 1" splay each side up to 2'-4" above the floor and a 4" splay each side above this. This doorway is thought to have been added and not in the original building. The thresholds are approximately 1" x 12" of wood.

Windows:

The window is located 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " to the north side of the fireplace on the same wall and is 3'-4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 3'-6", a casement with 6 lights 2 high, the head at 7'-5" above the floor, the splay widens toward the interior about 3/4" each side. The head and jamb consist of a flat wood member 1'-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 3" set flush with the exterior wall line, trimmed with a 2-3/4" x 1-3/4". The sill

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is similar but slightly pitched. A 1" x 1½" bevelled stop is used. This window was not in the original building.

Roof:

The ridge roof of heavy butt shakes replaces what appeared to be an early type thin wood shake or shingle roof covered by a more recent composition shingle roof supported on 1" x 6" to 10" sheathing carried on 2" x 8" rafters at about 2'-0" on centers. A 1" x 6" collar tie is used about 2'-6" below the ridge.

Doors:

The doors all are built up, that is, backed with matched boarding as though in an effort to make them heavier and reinforce them.

The south door of the larger room is 3'-6" x 6'-2" x 2" thick with two glazed panels 3 lights, 3 high each, and two wood panels about 1'-3" square with a 2" mould and a flat panel, side stiles are 3", center stile 6", top rail 4", lock rail 9½", 3'-0" above the floor, bottom rail 11½". The north door of this room is 2'-10" x 5'-8½", 4 panel.

In the smaller room the south door is 3'-3" x 5'-10" x 2" thick built up with matched boarding on the inside, with two upper glazed panels. The outside stiles are 4½", top rail 4½", lock rail 9" at 3'-2" above the floor, bottom rail 4½". The wood glass stops on the inside are 3/8" x 1-3/8".

Hardware:

The hardware evidently has been extensively changed but on the south door of the larger room there are two old wrought iron butts. Other hardware is more recent. There are some (removed) pieces of hardware on exhibit in the museum.

REFERENCES

1. San Diego Historical Society - Historic Landmarks, 1960, p. 25, by James Mills

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2. San Diego Evening Tribune - Landmark. March 6, 1956.
3. Maritime Registration - Ship, Clarissa Andrews 1821-52.
4. San Diego Mission Files, Reference: spring, site of adobe 1775.

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